

Blind or Vision Impaired Fact Sheet

What does 'blind' or 'vision impaired' mean?

- A person who is blind or vision impaired is unable to see well, even with the use of glasses or contact lenses.
- Most people who are blind or vision impaired have some degree of sight and the effects of vision impairment can vary greatly.
- [Visual disabilities](#) can include someone only have peripheral vision, blurred vision, light sensitivity, glare sensitivity, contrast sensitivity and light/dark adaptation.

How is a student's college experience impacted by being blind or vision impaired?

Difficulty	Possible impact in College
Accessibility of teaching and learning material & environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties seeing print, presentation slides and whiteboards. • Difficulty keeping up with lectures that use large quantities of visual content. • Difficulty, or inability, with notetaking during classes/lectures. • Completing academic tasks may take significantly longer, particularly if students need to spend extra time converting materials into accessible formats. • Difficulty with navigation and orientation around campus and placement sites. • Students may have difficulty with last minutes changes to lecture times/locations if they have not been given adequate notice.
Managing Assistive Technology (AT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although AT has significantly enhanced the participation of students who are blind or vision impaired, learning to use new AT can initially take extra time. • Types of AT which students may use include a screen magnifier, screen reading software, voice recognition software etc. • Using AT may slow the student's speed of work such as not being able to read for long periods of time, making it more difficult to complete assignments and exams.
Other difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing the use of a personal assistant or guide dog if this is required. • Students who have been recently diagnosed may experience emotional difficulties and/or difficulties with practical tasks.

To find out more, please visit:

- <https://www.ahead.ie/inclusiveteaching>
- www.ncbi.ie

How can you support a student who is blind or vision impaired?

1. Student-Centred Approach:

- If you are in doubt about how to support a student at any time, **ask the student** – they are the experts of their own needs!
- Create a space for students to **feel comfortable approaching you with any issues** (e.g. provide contact and student office hour details etc.).
- Implement any [classroom](#) and [exam](#) accommodations which were determined at the **student's Needs Assessment**.

2. Teaching and Learning:

- **Design course material so that they can be produced in an accessible format** on request. Following the [Guidelines for Accessible Documents](#), which provides guidelines for Word, PDF, websites and PowerPoint slides.
 - **Microsoft Word files can be easily manipulated** by the student into a format that suits them.
- Be guided by [Universal Design principles](#) when designing coursework.
- **Provide lecture notes, in a suitable format, in advance of the class.**
- Read PowerPoint slides aloud and **describe any diagrams or visual aids.**
- **Provide reading lists in advance and assistance with prioritising readings** for students who require an alternative format such as Braille or e-book. The production of texts in alternative formats is time consuming and costly.
- **Permit the student to use Assistive Technology** in the classroom.
- Consider the student's needs when **planning field trips or other activities.**
- Consider the **exam needs of the student for in-class or mid-semester exams** (e.g. does the student require a computer/assistive technology/scribe?).
- Support the student if they have **difficulties meeting deadlines.**

3. Communication:

- **Face the class when presenting** and ensure all material presenting on slides/whiteboard is **communicated verbally.**
- Some students who are blind or visually impaired may not recognise your voice, hence it can be **helpful to say your name when you greet the student.**
- **Guide dogs are at work and hence should not be disturbed.** Become familiar with the [UCD Animals on Campus Policy](#).
- **Always ask the student if they require assistance** before doing so.